



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Maria Caulfield MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy

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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

25 November 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 October on behalf of your constituent, , about safe and sustainable staffing for maternity services. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in replying.

The Maternity Safety Ambition is to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after birth. We understand that the role of NHS staff in maternity services is critical to safe care.

The department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan that will consider the mix and number of staff required in all parts of the country. The plan will also set out the actions and reforms needed to reduce workforce shortages and improve retention. The plan will look at all NHS professions, including midwifery and other occupations in maternity care teams.

NHS England has announced that it will be investing an additional £127million to strengthen the maternity workforce even further and fund programmes to enhance leadership, retention and neonatal maternity care. This is on top of the £95million investment in the recruitment of 1,200 more midwives and 100 more consultant obstetricians. NHS England is also offering funding and support to trusts to recruit 300-500 midwives from overseas in the next 12 months. We will continue to keep this funding under review.

In addition, NHS England has provided funding to support the recruitment of maternity support workers (MSWs) and to offer enhanced education support to align them with the Health Education England MSW competency, education and career development framework.

The impact of pregnancy, childbirth and baby loss on mental health can be significant, and we are expanding and transforming our mental health services so people can receive the support they need. This year, NHS England has provided £2.26million to support trusts with increasing the number of staff being trained in bereavement care and the number of days families can access specialist bereavement provision.

As part of the *NHS Long Term Plan*, we are looking to improve access to, and the quality of, perinatal mental health care for mothers and their partners. Mental health services are being expanded to include new hubs for new, expectant or bereaved mothers, which will offer physical health checks and psychological therapy in one building.

We previously funded Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal deaths charity, to work with other baby loss charities and Royal Colleges to produce and support the roll-out of a national bereavement care pathway (NBCP). This pathway reduces the variation in the quality of bereavement care provided by the NHS and covers a range of circumstances of baby loss, including miscarriage.

While the NBCP is not mandatory, by 1 April 99 trusts, or 78 per cent, had committed to adopting the nine NBCP standards. While recognising the importance of this initiative and supporting its continued roll-out, we want to allow flexibility for trusts to prioritise the work that is most important to their patients. Full implementation of the NBCP is dependent on substantial capital investment for trusts, and we recognise that a number of trusts would need to prioritise funding to fully meet the nine standards.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria', with a stylized flourish above the name.

MARIA CAULFIELD MP